AN
Assembly Lecture
OR A
SERMON,
Held forth at a
CONVENTICLE
UPON THIS
TEXT,

Saint's Practice, *Chapter*, 1. *Verse* 1.
It is Lawful for the Saints to Cheat the Wicked.

By a *Maintainer*, of the Saint's Privi-
ledge, and Liberty of Conscience.

Veritas, acerba.

Printed in the Year, 1674.

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It is lawful for the Saints to Cheat the VVicked.

AS the Saints are Innumerable, ſo their Priviledges are Infinite: The Stars of the Skie may be told; in counting the Sands of the Sea, or the Duſt of the Field, we may come to one that is Laſt; the Ocean has its Bounds, but the pretended Saints Priviledges are beyond Meaſure, they are Boundleſs. There is no State, no Power, no Law, can Rule them, but like the Wind which Blows where it liſteth, they are freed from all Control, and ſubject to nothing but the Directory of their own Will and Appetite.

This is the Compaſs by which they Steer, this is the Hand which ſhews the Time, let the Sun of Truth ſay what it will. The Infalibility of the *Pope* is much talked of, the Prerogative of the *Grand Sultan* is very High and Imperious, but the Saints Priviledge is Elevated above them all; and was it lawful to ſay, that it always went aſtray, yet may we be aſſured, it never Errs, 'tis never out o'th' way.

The Saints Priviledge cannot be perfectly Defined, for there is nothing more General, its Eſſence cannot be known: Only this we can ſay, that the Saints Priviledg, is the Saints Priviledge.

But that you may have ſome Hints of this Metaphyſical ſuperſtitious accident, I will deſcribe it (although imperfectly) yet as plainly as its Nature will afford.

Some derive the word Priviledge from *Lex & Privata*, and define it to be *Lex Privata, homini irrogata*; a Private Law given to a Man. But considering it is the Saints Priviledge (that singular Priviledge) we are to handle, as most agreeable and suiting to the Saint, I shall derive the word from *Lex & Privatio*, and so define it to be *Legis Privatio*; a Privation, and taking away of the Law, for it is therefore called Priviledge, because it Exempts them from the Power of the Law, and divides them from the common Condition of Mankind.

And here I am prevented of parting and distributing this general thing, Priviledge, into the several sorts; for I am fallen into the Mouth of Division before I was aware, I am fallen amongst the Saints, and upon their Priviledge, which is so proper to them; that as that Distinguishes them from all the People of the World, so they distinguish that from all other sorts of Priviledges, and both of them together, Cut, Divide, and Mangle the whole Universe into Parties, Sects, and Factions.

This Saintly Priviledge belongs to those Men who are commonly called *Seperatists*, *Phanaticks*, &c. These are those *Medusa*'s Heads, on which grow many Snakes, (Serpents) that are full of Venom, and yet have lovely Flattering Out-sides, such as would Deceive *Eve* again, if she Lived in *Paradise*; and do beguile her Progeny at this day, devouring Widdows Houses, even with their long Prayers, and by Groans and Whinings, delude the Multitude, as *Mahomet* did with Fits. A form of Godliness they have, but their Hearts are full of Impieties, their Minds full of Treasons and Rebellion, their Hands full of Rapine, Blood, Murthers and Regicides; witness the Tragedy of the late Times.

But not to Describe them only by the Habits of their Minds, wheresoever you see a man exalted in a Meeting-House, doing penance in the surface of a White Cap, environ'd

viron'd with an Aſſembly-Cloak, or a Frize Coat, which helps in ſtead of a *Hum*, or a *Ha*, to ſpend time, by pulling forwards the *Coat*, firſt on one Shoulder, then on the other, whilſt the more unwilling Matter, which ſticks below, is pull'd up, and brought to Utterance: Whereſoever you ſee one thus Clad, Whining and Groaning as if he Laboured for Life; the poſture of his Eyes in one Extream or other, either turning up the Whites to Amaze and Affright the Spectators, or ſhutting of them cloſe, as aſhamed of himſelf, the Place and Company. This is one of thoſe Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing: This is the Sounding Braſs and Tinkling Cymbal: This is one of the Adders which Grows on the Head I mentioned before; and the Subject to which the Saints Priviledge doth appertain.

You may meet theſe Serpents Crawling up and down in other Shapes, differing from the former, ſome with Beads in their Hands, others with no Superſtitious Relicks I'le aſſure you; no, not ſo much as a Hatband on their Hats, or a Ribond on the lower Covering of the outward Man; a Fry whoſe *Lenten* Faces ſhew they were Spawned of Shotten Herrings, and meet together only to compare Uncouth Looks. There are many more, which I forbear to Enumerate, reſerving them for another place, and ſo I paſs from the Uuclean Cage where this Bird (the Saints Priviledge) Rouſts, and come to its Object, about which it is Imployed, and the end for which it is uſed, as alſo the Principles from which it moves.

The chief Uſe of this Priviledge is, to compaſs and bring about the Deſigns of the Saint: His Deſigns are twofold, namely, Profit and Honour; Avarice prompts him to Inrich himſelf, and Pride puts him upon ſeeking Reputation in the World; he loves to be Admired, and Eſteemed amongſt the Brethren, as a precious Heavenly minded man; but in the mean time he Aims at Worldly Intereſt, and the Obtaining ſome Benefit to himſelf: And to accompliſh this, what bet-

let Course can he take then Satan did when he first tempted Mankind, that is Allure them with the discerning Knowledg of Good and Evil; and here he must Teach them what is Good, and what is Evil: He is Good, and therefore must be followed; others are Evil, and therefore must be avoided, and when he has perswaded the silly Multitude into this Belief, then he is likely to have a fruitful Harvest, and his Barns fill'd with a plentiful Crop, and his Projects will go on successfully; but in this Carreer he will meet with many Obstructions; many Laws will oppose him, Religion will hinder him, the Settled Government of most States and Kingdoms will Thwart him; wherefore to clear the way, and overthrow Laws, Religion and Kingdoms, he must Fly to the Saints Priviledg, which being Skilfully managed, will procure his Hearts desire.

Before the Apparition of this Harpy, was the Time Men call the Golden Age; Religion was then Imbraced for its own sake, not to cover other Designs; Men strove to be Religious indeed, rather then to be thought so: The common Concern of all was to serve Heaven, and love one another: Such! such, was the Uniformity of that Age, Peace and Plenty kissed each other, and Universal Obedience to the Laws, made the Governours happy, and the Subjects blessed. But when this Saints Priviledg started up, Ten Thousand Mischiefs did accompany it, Pride, Envie, Strife, Covetousness, and innumerable other Sins were its Life-Guard; thence followed Faction, Schism, Treason, Rebellion, Murther of Princes, Destruction of Religion, Laws, States, and Kingdoms.

As *Luciferis* ambition caused him to attempt the Dethroning of God Almighty, so this Saints Priviledg makes them set their Mouths against Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities, whilst Meekness, Humility, Religion, and true Christian Piety perswade them otherwise.

Thus have we, so briefly as we could, Represented to you the

the Saints Priviledg, whereof we intend to ſpeak; and although this Priviledg is manifold, as you have already heard, yet at this time we will only take a Branch of it, which is that contained in the Text, namely,

It is lawful for the Saints to Cheat the Wicked.

In which words, obſerve with me Four Things: Firſt the Act, namely, *To Cheat.* Secondly, The Actors, which are *The Saints.* Thirdly, The Patient, or Object of this Action, namely, *The Wicked.* And Fourthly, The Quality of the Act, that is, *Lawful: It is lawful for the Saints to Cheat the Wicked.*

And firſt of the Act, *To Cheat:* Cheat is a word of a large Signification, it comprehends all Sin, and extends to all Vitious Actions; there are many words Equivalent to this, and are uſed in the ſame ſenſe, as to Defraud, Cozen, Deceive, Delude, Over-reach, Beguile, Betray, and the like; and of Affinity with theſe, are Deceits, Covin, Fraud, Deluſion, Treachery, Impoſture, Hypocriſie, *&c.* And from hence Knaves, Impoſtors, Traytors, Deceivers, Hypocrites, Diſſemblers, *&c.* receive Denomination; and all theſe agree with our Saint in the Text.

Cheating is the chief Inſtrument of the Devil, and the Engin by which he brings about his greateſt Works, by this he brought Deſtruction upon Mankind, beguiling our firſt Parents with his Inſinuating Flatteries, ſubtilly taking upon him the form of a Glittering Serpent; firſt catching the Eye, our Senſes, that thereby he might have Entrance, to lay hold upon our ſouls.

Oh! how prevalent are ſubtle Flatteries, eſpecially thoſe which come with ſuch ſpecious pretences, as this Serpents did: *Yea, hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not Eat of every Tree of the Garden?* Doth he ſay that if you do, ye ſhall ſurely die? I tell you, nay, ye ſhall not die, *For God doth know that in the*

the day ye Eat thereof, then your Eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil. I ſay, how prevalent and irreſiſtable are ſuch plauſible Temptations! otherwiſe, methinks the Commands of the great Creator, ſo newly Impoſed, immediately after the Creation, might have Deterred the Creature from ſin; the fear of Death, one would think, might have reſtrained the Appetite, let the Object have been never ſo deſirable; ſurely the poſture of the Serpents Turning and Twining, ſeeming to go one way and another, but in truth goes neither, might have made them ſuſpect him; No, *Knowledge, and to be as Gods,* are ſuch Temptations, that Innocency it ſelf cannot reſiſt them.

Wherefore our Saint taking pattern from the great Deceiver, forms all his Impoſtures and Deluſions, in the ſame Mold that Satan did his, and ſets before the People the Temptations of Knowledge, Religion, the ſpirit of Light, to be as Gods, Liberty, Freedom, *&c.* telling them that if they follow him, and do as he directs, their Eyes ſhall be opened, and they ſhall know themſelves to be the only precious choſen people of God, freed from the ſpots and defilements of the World, freed from the powers of the Earth, and from the Obligation of Laws, either of the Church or State, whilſt in the mean time, they make Room for Rebellion, and Implicitly teach their Followers to diſobey the Almighty and his Vice-gerents.

For which purpoſe there muſt be (and is already publiſhed) a new Book of *Ethicks*, to teach the VVorld to break Laws with a good Conſcience; wherein it is Aſſerted, that penal Laws may be broken, and that by the Intent of the Law-Maker, who impoſes a Mulct or penalty upon the Offender, and thereby commutes the Obedience for the Penalty. Excellent Doctrine! and I doubt not but it will be well Improved; better cannot be Expected from a Tavern, Ale-houſe, or Meeting-houſe, where penal Laws are daily broken: But ſurely though the Law be ſo in his

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Conſcience, who is a notorious Offender, and muſt uſe Clouts to wrap up the Sores of his Conſcience; yet other men obey the Law, and are ſubject to every Ordinance of Man for Conſcience-ſake, and do not wilfully offend that they might pay the Penalty, but think the Law is Obligatory in Conſcience, and the Penalty is added by way of Aggravation, to Deter men from the Offence: For if the Intent of the Law-giver was not to have ſincere Obedience, his Laws would be rather Tricks to get Money, then Inſtruments for the better Ordering and Governing Societies.

And if Obedience be Due in this manner to Laws (as without all doubt it is) and the Scripture injoyns us to be ſubject to them: How dare we obſtinately and reſolutely Diſobey them? How dare we meet in Conventicles, which is forbidden by the Law, being found by ſad Experience dangerous to the State, and the occaſion of Strife and Diviſion, thoſe deſtructives of Humane Society? How dare we? Why, I muſt appeal to our Saint in the Text, who has an Anſwer ready prepared for him by his great Maſter; who, as I have already ſhewed you: Preached, *Yea, hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not eat*, &c. So our Saint, yea, doth the Law ſay we ſhall not meet, *&c.* I tell you, that you may; we have a Priviledge in Conſcience, to Tranſgreſs and Break what Laws we pleaſe: *It is lawful for the Saints*, &c.

Here I might Expoſe our Saint to ſhame enough, by diſcovering his Nakedneſs, and pulling off that Vizard with which he doth deceive the World; but when I conſider that 'tis impoſſible to Enumerate half his Cheats, and they are ſo frequently Practiſed that every one meets with them, I purpoſely forbear a particular Account, referring you to the Hiſtory of the late Times, where they ſwarm.

And inſtead of a Catalogue, I preſent you with a Chariot, which like *Phaeton's*, ſets the World on Fire. This Chariot is the Saints Cheat I now ſpeak of, the Wheels are the Ignorance of the People, and the Admiration they have

of

of him: The Horſes that draw this Chariot, are his Pride and Covetuouſneſs: Our Saint is the Driver, and a Conventicle is his Whip.

I have ſpoken of the Chariot already, which has a Stage almoſt in every Town of all Countries, and Travels up and down the World, being carried to every thing; by the Horſes, Pride and Covetouſneſs: I will now ſay ſomewhat of the Wheels, Ignorance is a good Wheel, on this the Chariot runs ſwiftly; where the People are Learned, the Chariot moves ſlowly, Letters are like Clogs, and good Rudiments are ſuch a Burthen, that it cannot ſtir; where men are well Educated in the Prinicples of Religion, our Saints Cheat can hardly paſs, but amongſt the Ignorant it runs poſt. And this Wheell has a good Fellow, namely, the Admiration which the People have for our Saint, for when he has once Inſinuated himſelf into them, ſo that they have a good Opinion of him and Admire him, then the Chariot gets ground, and flies merrily; then all he ſays is Goſpel, and nay, more Authentick then the Goſpel; for *Calvin* was ſo Admired by a—— (you may know him by his Speech) that he profeſſed if St. *Paul* were Alive, and to Preach the ſame hour that *Calvin* did, he would leave St. *Paul*, and go to hear *Calvin*: You may believe him, for *Calvins* Writings are followed and preferred before St. *Pauls*. Oh brave Wheel! well Greaſed! and Excellently well fitted to the Chariot!

Of the Horſes, Pride or Covetuouſneſs, I cannot tell which Excels. Pride has moſt Mettle, but Covetuouſneſs is the ſureſt Drawer. To be Applauded for Excellent parts, for a Singular man, for a Gifted man, for a Leading man; to be called *Rabbi*, to be eſteemed a ſure Guid of Souls, a true ſetter of Conſcience, to be Wiſer then thoſe that follow him; To have Silence made at a Conventicle, and be ſet above the reſt by Head and Shoulders; to have Liberty to Speak what he pleaſes, and that more to the Nodification,

tion, then edification, of the beholders, for they Edifie little, but Nod much; I ſay theſe preheminences puff up, and ſomtimes move the chariot briskly, a little pride many times induces a great cheat, yet this Horſe is often jaded; for although our Saints ambition makes him aſpire above Heaven it ſelf, yet frequently have I known, when covetuouſneſs draws one way, and pride another, covetu, ouſneſs has got the better, and went away with the Chariot: To be head of an Aſſembly, ſole Teacher, and Inſtructer, not ſubject to Law or Magiſtrate, is very acceptable; but a Good Living, a Fat Benefice, has made our Saint leave them all, and be Subordinate to Legal Authority: Nay, this Horſe has been ſo ſtrong, that it hath drawn the Chariot to *Simon Magus*, to help our Saint in, even by one of his Contracts.

Covetuouſneſs hath made him Prey upon the Brethren themſelves, he has warmed their Zeal ſo hot, by preſſing the Duty upon them, of Raiſing Money to Build a Conventicling Houſe, that they have Contributed, and given him Money enough to Build one; and when he has Built it, he has made Uſe of the Houſe for himſelf, and turned the Brethren out; telling them the Houſe was not ſo Convenient as he thought it would have been, and that he knew of another Place, much more convenient, for the Service; and hath wrought upon them ſo, that they have made a new Collection, and Built another Houſe: And thus our Saint has ſerved them Two or Three times, and Chouſed them of Two or Three Houſes one after another.

Ah! This Horſe Covetuouſneſs, is an unruly Beaſt, he draws our Saint to all manner of Viecs, to Lying, Hippocriſie, Falſhhood in Dealing, nay, even to the ſins of the Fleſh; many, yea, many a time hath he drawn our Saint to his Neighbour's Wife, and there ſo Kicked and Friſked, that he hath thrown our Saint upon her; Ah! threw him even upon her.

Truly, this Horſe is ſo Ungoverned, that no man can Live in quiet near our Saint, he Breaks down his Neighbours Fences, eats up his Graſs, and his Corn, and is ſo often taken *Damage Feſant*, that was he not a ſerviceable Horſe, and very profitable to our Saint, he would not keep him.

But ſo long as he Draws the Chariot well, our Saint will not part with him, his Neighbour muſt endure him.

One Faculty this Horſe has, which makes our Saint highly prize him, he is an excellent ſtretcher of Conſcience, no Bars and Tenter-hooks can ſtretch Cloth half ſo well; take him in a Morning when he is Freſh, and put him to our Saints conſcience, he will draw it ſo wide, that 'twill ſwallow any thing.

Having given you an Account of the Horſes; in the next place, we come to handle the Whip: And conſidering the Horſes appear to be ſo good, ſo Mettleſom, and ſuch ſure Drawers, one would think our Saint needed no Whip; Yet a Whip is very needful, and that will appear to you in theſe particulars: I do not intend to ſpeak any thing in Diſparagement of the Horſes; for I agree there cannot be Two more ſerviceable Horſes in the World, and were they in an Ordinary mans ſervice, without all doubt a Whip would be altogether unneceſſary. But you muſt underſtand, our Saint is a very hard Rider, he Drives furiouſly, I never met him in my life but that he was above three quarters ſpeed, upon common occaſions he Rides poſt, and about Matters more then ordinary, he Rides as *Jockies* ride Races; in a Furlong and a Half he leaves the man, that Rides for the Midwife above a Furlong behind him. Now for ſuch a Hot-ſpur as this, you will agree that a Whip is requiſite; But what Whip? Not any Whip, not a common Whip, it muſt be a Whip of many cords, that hath many Laſhes, it muſt be a Whip ſuitable to our Saints deſigns, and therefore ſurely a Whip of his own making is beſt, and that's a Conventicle:

venticle! For this has many Cords, many Lashes, it hath many Rich, and they serve as so many Cords for the Horse *Covetousness*; It hath many Admirers of our Saint, and they serve as so many Lashes for the other Horse *Pride*: These Motives are the Spurs that prick on the Palfreys which hurry away the Chariot. Our Saint is never so Rampant as at a Conventicle; there his Pride Snorts and Prances, spurns at Government, condemning and contemning all those that are not of his Way, and scornfully pitying all those poor lost Creatures that Gainsay a Meeting-House. Ah poor souls! they live in sin, there is no hopes of them, they know not Good from Evil, they are stupified, and have no sense of the Joy, and Refreshments, that we have at our Meetings, *&c.*

In the mean time Covetuousness claps his Tail betwixt his Legs, lays his Ears close to his Head, and Leers at the Rich and Wealthy Brethren! he pulls the Chariot hard, towards the Sisters Silver and Gold Bodkins, and with such Concupiscence, that sometimes he gets Bodkin, Sister and all.

'Tis very fit I should now tell you how our Saint handles his Whip, and in doing this, I must shew you the place, where Policy hath Taught our Saint to put the Whip: That Ale-house, that Inn, that Tavern, is best Scituated, and most Dexterously contrived that hath a Thorough-fair (as 'tis called) in it, for by that convenience Custome is gained; so our Saint, that hath all the Tricks of a Tavern, or Tipling-house, hath likewise this, and places his Conventicle where there may be a Common Way or Passage thorow it, in hopes thereby to Catch some silly Gudgeon or other, that comes near his Net, so Mountebanks gain company; And he well knows that many Persons fall into the Loose Sport of Pidgeon-Holes, meerly upon the occasion of passing by them: Therefore with wonted Craft doth our Saint order his Conventicle.

It follows, that I accost the Driver, but he looks so *Jehu*-like, that I dare not Meddle with him, *qua Driver*. I shall meet with him in the Text, being the second Thing I desired you to observe therein: *It is lawful for the Saints to Cheat the Wicked.*

I have at large Treated of the Act contained in the Text, namely, *The Cheat*: I am now come to the *Actors*, and those you see are *Saints*; what kind of *Saints*, partly appears by that has been said, and shall be shewed here more fully.

Some divide Mankind into two sorts, *viz.* The Godly, and the Ungodly: In truth and reality, our *Saint* must be Ranked under the latter Head, for ('tis too plain) his Actions shew him to be one of that Party. But he has a Priviledge (the Priviledge I spake of before) to be accounted and reckoned amongst the Godly; and as one of that Form we must take him here, in respect of his Priviledge, to be Reputed so, but not in respect of his Practices, for they shew him to be quite another thing. I promised you to sub-divide those general Heads of *Separatists*, *Phanatick*, &c. and present you with the several sorts and fryes, that are contained under them; but seeing the Distinctions would be Infinite (so much have they been ever given to Division) I should confound you with sub-divisions, and new names: For every *Sect* takes up a new Name, with the old Villanies, they change the Name, but retain the *Sin*: As those which were called *Pharisees* of old, are now called *Presbyterians*, and the like in a hundred Instances. Therefore I purposely pass by the particulars, and hope our *Saint* will not Quarrel with me for it. But you may know them by these Marks. Their Words and their Works never agree. They are Opiniated of themselves, and condemn all others. A Lye in a Brothers Mouth, is truer, then Truth it self in another mans. They suspect and conclude all men to be Wicked, but themselves. They begin all their Mischiefs, in the Name of the Lord, when they Act the greatest Wickedness

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in the World; they will bear down all, that it is the greatest piece of Piety, and Religion in the World. That which is unjuſt in another mans caſe, is moſt juſt in theirs. They will believe none but the confiding men of their own Party. By theſe Marks and many more like them, you may know the *Saint* meant in the Text. In a word, the World is his *Stage*, and he is to Act the Devils part, a part that has been Acting ever ſince the World began, and will not be Finiſhed, until the Worlds end.

From the Actor or Agent, I turn to the Patient, the Perſons that are to be *Cheated*, and thoſe are the Wicked: The Wicked! But who are they? In ſhort, they are all thoſe that do oppoſe the *Saints*. Oppoſe them! In what? In any thing. For if that which doth agree with the *Saints* is Righteous, then that which doth diſagree with the *Saints* is Unrighteous; hence it proceeds that our *Saint* doth and may Rail againſt Government, againſt the Laws, againſt Princes, againſt Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Rulers, for theſe Oppoſe the *Saint*, and therefore are wicked, yea, very wicked, and may be Cheated. But the Breakers of penal Laws, as the *Vintners* that ſell VVine above the Rates; the Merchants who ſteal Cuſtoms; they that draw Ale without Licenſe; thoſe that Play at forbidden Games; they that keep Bawdy Houſes, and Conventicles in them: Theſe are not the VVicked intended in the Text, no, they are not VVicked, they are Friends: Theſe agree with us, with our *Saint* to break Laws; a Tipling Houſe, without Licenſe; yea, a Bawdy Houſe, where there is a Meeting, is like unto, nay, it is a Meeting Houſe.

The Quality of the Act was the laſt thing I propounded to ſpeak to, and that appears to be lawful: *It is Lawful for the Saints*, &c. Here you muſt underſtand, that there is a Law written in the Mind, and a Law of the Fleſh written in the Members: Our *Saint* is not guided by the firſt Law, but by the latter, *viz.* The Law of the Fleſh which wars againſt that

that of the Mind, and by this Law, *It is Lawful for the Saints to Cheat*, &c. Having Explained the Terms, with as much Brevity, as Perſpicuity would admit, and ſhewed you the ſenſe of the VVords in the Text, *viz.* Firſt of the Act, and uſe of Cheating. *S*econdly, who are the VVicked. Thirdly, who are the *Saints* ſpoken of in the Text. I will now ſend out our *Saint* full Cry into the world, with Mouth as wide, as ever any was, at the Bull and Mouth by *Alderſgate*

It is Lawful for the Saints to Cheat the Wicked.

I my Beloved, it is lawful, full of Law, for the *Saints* to Cheat the VVicked; thoſe ungodly VVretches, thoſe Drunkards, thoſe prophane *S*abbath-breakers, thoſe Adulterers, thoſe Enemies, and Perſecutors of the *Saints*, that will not let the *Saints* injoy Liberty of Conſcience; that deny us the comfort of Meeting, Me the comfort of ſpeaking to you, and you the comfort of hearing me; Me the comfort of ſeeing you, and you the comfort of beholding me: Me, ah me! that in the Times of Rebellion, had full liberty, to ſay, and to do, and to teach you to do what we liſted; Me! who had not the Biſhops Lawn-ſleeves, but their Lands. Ah precious Times! VVhen? VVhen, ſhall we ſee thoſe Golden days again?

In thoſe days I was not accounted a Non-conformiſt, for I did conform to every thing in Faſhion, to every Device the prevailing Party (whereof I was chief) could Invent; Conſcience, then had no check, no tie, all things, were Lawful that were Profitable, and the *Saints* deſires, were their ſureſt Guides.

Conſcience had got the Head and Maſtery of the Laws, and ſome of you (my Beloved) do remember, that a Brother might have another mans Eſtate for asking: Ah goodly Times! to be wiſhed, to be hoped for again, but I leave the ſucceſs to your Prayers.

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In thoſe days the Text was not in Queſtion, but in Practice: No need of a *Sermon* upon it, the wicked durſt not deny, that the *Saints* might cheat them; their Goods, their Lands, yea, their Lives were at the *Saints* pleaſure, and you know we took them when we pleaſed.

'Tis unneceſſary to remind you by what means we obtained this Faculty, otherwiſe you may remember, we did, and accompliſhed all, in the Name of the Lord, we cried out, that Religion was in Danger, and ſet open the Mouths as well of thoſe who underſtood it not, as thoſe who did; not a Kitchin-wench, not a Groom, not a *Scullion*, but that could Preach, and although they knew nothing elſe, yet could tell in what points true Religion was wronged, and how to mend it.

VVe Railed againſt the Rulers, and their Government, and Bellowed and roared for Liberty, as Hogs a Killing, and here we brought in conſcience to ſqueak, which ſo prevailed, that we Murthered Kings and Princes for conſcience ſake.

VVe deſtroyed the Government of Church and *State*, we Kill'd the *Malignants* and took away their Eſtates, and this is the ſum of the *Saints* Priviledge.

And now my Beloved, is it not Lawful to Cheat them that oppoſe this? yea, it is Lawful; It is profitable, and therefore Lawful.

And this ſhall be the only Argument I will uſe at preſent to confirm the Text, my own and your Practices ſufficiently Illuſtrate the truth.

One word of Application, and I have done.

Is it Lawful for the *Saints* to Cheat the Wicked? Why this may ſerve for a uſe of Conſolation, it will comfort us in our greateſt Afflictions, let Poverty do its worſt we have a Priviledge, will help us; common Thieves they muſt be Hanged

Hanged, but we have a Priviledge to Cheat. This will fill our Bellies, 'twill fill our Trunks, 'twill assist our Friends, and make Provisions for our Posterity. Ah! what a Blessing do we injoy! The Wicked in the Text they are kept from it, they must not Cheat: They must starve rather then use this Priviledge they must obey the Law, for conscience-sake, Conscience gives us Liberty to Disobey. They must be subject to Magistrates, our Priviledge exempts us.

Secondly, Is it Lawful for the Saints to cheat, *&c.* Why then I Exhort you to make use of your time, and enjoy this Priviledge, whilst you live, for you cannot have it in another World: Nay, if the Law or Reason prevail, amongst Law-givers, then the Wings of this Priviledge will be clip'd, therefore use it, whilst you may, whilst Faction doth last, whilst Sedition is predominant, and brings preferment; That so ye may be Furnished with the Mammon of Unrighteousness which will make Friends for you, when ye fail.

Thirdly, Is it Lawful (my Beloved) for the Saints to cheat the Wicked? Why this may serve for Exprobation, how justly may we inviegh against the wicked in the Text: Those that oppose our Right, and deny us this Priviledge, I say how justly may we inviegh against them, as the most Ungrateful people in the World! In the late Times of *Anarchy*, when the Saints Priviledge was Exalted, 'tis well known, that all the wicked had forfeited, all the Rights, Priviledge, Liberties, Estates, and Lives, to us, and yet we, merciful men, spared them, we did not take away all, from all: 'Tis true, we Kill'd some Thousands, we Sequestred the *Malignants*, we Recovered the Kings and Bishops Lands, *&c.* But what is that to the purpose? Are not they Merciful and Kind, who, when they may destroy all, spare some? And did not we spare some when we had power, and it was lawful for us to Kill all? And yet the wicked are ungrateful, that they have forgot our Kindnesses, they make no Retaliation, but would if they could take away from

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us even the use of *Conventicles*. Ha! my Beloved, what ungodly Wretches are these! That would not allow us the Liberty of Meeting. VVhere we have an opportunity, of comforting one another, of easing our Minds, and our Bodies, and Refreshing one another; VVhere we are Fed with the precious Doctine, in the Text, and you hear that, and many other such Truths proceed from my Mouth, as if they were Gods VVord and Divine Revelations. Ha vile! and ungrateful wicked! that would hinder such Mercies, we seldom *Pray*, or *Preach*, but that we remember them, in our *Prayers* and Sermons, and yet they return us no thanks, so Unthankful and void of Grace are the wicked!

And since I am fallen upon the Subject of Ingratitude, to shew our utter dislike and abhorency of it, I will Reprove it even in you, even in the Saints, that so you may be without spot, without blemish. You know (my Beloved) that by the Act of Confirmation, of Ministers, the wicked were Restored to their Benefices, and then was I put out of a good Parsonage, and if my conscience would have been so wicked as to have conformed; yet could I not have gotten a convenient Benefice, so contrary was that change to the profit and promotion of the Saints. VVherefore I applied my self to you, and Incited you to the Building of a Meeting House, and the maintaining of a Non-conforming Minister, who should Instruct you in all the ways of cheating the wicked, and Build you up in Stubbornness, and Stiff-neckedness, and so make you a Choice, Select, peculiar People, to Live and Die in Opposition to the Government of Church and State.

To this you were easily perswaded, and by my pains and the Assistance of others, I got to help of my Cloath, and Coif, you are well grounded in the Rudiments

diments of VVaywardnes, and throughly Educated in the Doctrine of the Text. But before I could bring you to a perfect Habit; I and my fellow Labourers spent many Drops of Sweat, I could not hold out my self, but was forced to ply you with two or three Sirrers up, one after another, and wirry you, as Dogs the Bear, or Bull successively.

At first you considered our Extraordinary Labour, and (to your Praise be it spoken) you Contributed very Bountifully to all our Wants and Necessities; I my self at one Meeting, have had a Hundred Pounds of the Collection, for my own share, and the Swear of the other Undertakers, have likewise been Answered by your Drops.

But now: Ah! It grieves me to tell you of it, I speak it with Tears in my Eyes; you, even you, are very Backward in your Payments and Contributions. You are grown worse then any other Conventicle. There is —— his Conventicle Raises Eighty Pound a time, take one time with another: But many a time, ah! many a time have I spent my self upon you, my Bowels have Yerned over you: I say many, many a time, and yet I could not raise a Heart within you, to make a Purse of Forty Pounds at most, no not Forty Pounds.

And are not these sad Times? Is not this a sad Age? When the Saints are so slow to good Works. Mistake me not, the sadness doth not arise from my Want of that Abundance of Money your Liberal Contributions used to supply me with but from this

this, that your Defect herein, is a Sign you are fallen from Grace, 'tis a Sign your Zeal is not so Warm as it has been, 'tis a Sign the Doctrine we Preach has not such an Influence upon you, as it ought. 'Tis a Sign of a Dissolution, and that the World will be at an end. Ah! What shall I say? My Heart is full, my Heart is full. But farewel.

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this, that your Doctrine herein, is a Sign you are fallen from Grace, 'tis a Sign your Zeal is not so Warm as it has been, 'tis a Sign the Doctrine you Preach has not such an Influence upon you, as it ought. 'Tis a Sign of a Diminution, and that the World will be at an end. Ah! What shall I say? My Heart is full, my Heart is full. But farewell.